WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of controlling remote computing devices (14) containing associated client components (10), the method comprising a given client component (10)

contacting a status server (22) containing client component status information;

receiving client component status information from the status server (22) relayed in response to the client component (10) contacting the status server;

evaluating the received status information to determine a status of the given client component (10);

in response to determining a particular status, contacting a command server (24) configured to send executable commands to the client component (10) in response to being contacted;

receiving a command from the command server (24) instructing the client component (10) to perform a desired task; and

in response to receiving said command, performing the desired task.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the desired task comprises sending location tracking information.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the remote computing devices (14) are laptop or handheld computers.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said status information indicates whether the remote computing device (14) associated with the given client component (10) is stolen.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein both the status server (22) and command server (24) are each configured for direct, independent communication with the client components (10).

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the status server (22) is configured for communication with the client components (10) through a common computer network (18).

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the computer network (18) is the Internet.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein the status server (22) is mirrored at webservers globally.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the status information comprises a list of client components (10) to contact the command server (24), and wherein evaluating the received status information comprises determining whether the list includes the given client component.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the list of client components (10) includes those associated with devices (14) reported as stolen.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the list of client components (10) includes those requiring upgrade.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the desired task enables retrieval of information stored on the associated device (14).

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the desired task comprises encrypting data.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the desired task comprises deleting data.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein the client components (10) are configured to contact the command server (24) via a telephone system (20).

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the command server (24) includes an incoming call telephone number identification system (26).

17. The method of claim 15 wherein contacting the command server (24) comprises

searching to find a modem; and

upon identifying a modem, turning a modem speaker off and making a telephone call to a desired telephone number.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein searching to find a modem comprises sequentially writing a Hayes "ATZ" command to each COM port of the associated computing device and waiting for an "OK" response.

19. The method of claim 15 wherein the command server (24) is configured to receive the telephone call and identify an incoming telephone number for tracking location of the computing device (14) associated with the given client component (10).

20. An apparatus for controlling remote computing devices (14) containing associated client components (10), the apparatus comprising

a status server (22) containing client component status information and configured to be contacted by the client components (10) and, in response to being contacted by a given client component (10), send said client component status information to said given client component; and

a command server (24) configured to be directly contacted by a given client component in response to said client component receiving status information from the status server (22) indicating that contact with the command server (24) is necessary, and to send appropriate, executable commands to said client component (10) in response to being contacted;

each client component (10) being configured to initiate contact with the status server, receive client component status information from the status server (22) relayed in response to the client component (10) contacting the status server, evaluate the received status information to determine a status of the client component (10), initiate contact with the command server (24) in response to determining a particular status,

receive the commands from the command server (24), and perform a desired task in response to the received commands.

21. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the desired task comprises sending location tracking information.

22. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the remote computing devices (14) are laptop or handheld computers.

23. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein said status information indicates whether the remote computing device (14) associated with the given client component (10) is stolen.

24. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein both the status server (22) and command server (24) are each configured for direct, independent communication with the client components (10).

25. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the status server (22) is configured for communication with the client components (10) through a common computer network (18).

26. The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the computer network (18) is the Internet.

27. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the status server (22) is mirrored at webservers globally.

28. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the status information comprises a list of client components (10) to contact the command server (24), and wherein evaluating the received status information comprises determining whether the list includes the given client component.

29. The apparatus of claim 28 wherein the list of client components (10) includes those associated with devices (14) reported as stolen.

30. The apparatus of claim 28 wherein the list of client components (10) includes those requiring upgrade.

31. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the desired task enables retrieval of information stored on the associated device (14).

32. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the desired task comprises encrypting data.

33. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the desired task comprises deleting data.

34. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the client components (10) are configured to contact the command server (24) via a telephone system (20).

35. The apparatus of claim 34 wherein the command server (24) includes an incoming call telephone number identification system (26).

36. The apparatus of claim 34 wherein contacting the command server (24) comprises

searching to find a modem; and

upon identifying a modem, turning a modem speaker off and making a telephone call to a desired telephone number.

37. The apparatus of claim 36 wherein searching to find a modem comprises sequentially writing a Hayes "ATZ" command to each COM port of the associated computing device and waiting for an "OK" response.

38. The apparatus of claim 34 wherein the command server (24) is configured to receive the telephone call and identify an incoming telephone number for

tracking location of the computing device (14) associated with the given client component (10).